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SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [KPAL](#) [IS](#) [IZ](#) [JO](#)

SUBJECT: NODEL WEXLER MEETING WITH KING ABDULLAH

Classified By: CDA David Hale for Reasons 1.4 (b), (d)

SUMMARY

1. (C) In a November 8 meeting with NODEL Wexler, King Abdullah advocated early Palestinian elections to replace Yaser Arafat with a new generation of leaders. The King urged that a new leadership be quickly empowered to improve socio-economic conditions to bolster its legitimacy among the Palestinian people. On Iraq, the King was hopeful that elections could be held in January, but said that achieving positive election results was more important than timing. End Summary.

POST-ARAFAT LEADERSHIP

2. (C) King Abdullah, along with Minister of Planning Awadallah and Deputy Prime Minister/Acting Foreign Minister Muasher, met with the members of NODEL Wexler on November 8. The King said that achieving progress on the Palestinian-Israeli front was vital. He questioned whether Arafat's health would allow him to be a viable leader, even if Arafat pulled through his current medical crisis. According to the King, Egyptian President Mubarak believed that Arafat was the only Palestinian with the stature needed to sign and implement a peace agreement. The King differed with this assessment; he said Arafat had proven incapable of signing a deal. The Palestinians needed to turn now to a new generation of leaders. Whether Arafat died or lingered on, the King advocated early Palestinian elections to help get a stronger government and a legitimate Prime Minister in place.

3. (C) Asked what the U.S. could do to help a new Palestinian leadership, the King said "mistakes" leading to the resignation of former Palestinian PM Abu Mazen -- i.e., "lack of adequate support" at the beginning of his tenure and Israel's "continual changing of the goal posts" for his expected performance -- had to be avoided. As soon as the new leadership emerged, the King advised, it must be empowered by providing it the means to have an impact on the socio-economic level. The Palestinian people needed to see right away how they would benefit from a new team.

IRAQ

4. (C) King Abdullah said he was hopeful that the January time-table for Iraqi elections could be met. However, if security conditions did not improve, he stated that a brief delay, such as occurred this summer in holding a national conference to choose the interim National Council, might be advisable to ensure the desired results. Holding proper elections on a national level and achieving a positive outcome was more important than election timing, expressed the King. The fact that Ayatollah Sistani, at the urging of Iran, wanted early elections had to be seen as a warning sign. Royal Court Minister Samir Rifai added that transitioning from a state of emergency directly to elections might be "too fast."

5. (C) The King said that if Iraqi security forces are to allow U.S. forces to re-deploy, they must be given longer, more flexible training courses. He spoke of the damage of de-Baathification and claimed that it had sidelined the entire intelligentsia and professional classes, including doctors and surgeons. The King hoped that ways could be found to "bring back" these people, especially the mature core of the military. While the IIG should identify and exclude "the bad guys," the rest needed to be drawn back in.

6. (U) Baghdad minimize considered.

HALE